



*Agatha Christie*

---

**POIROT**

## **The Labours of Hercules**

Adapted by Guy Andrews

Directed by Andy Wilson

Produced by David Boulter

# PRODUCTION NOTES

**\*\*\*The information contained herein is strictly embargoed from all press use, non-commercial publication, or syndication until Wednesday October 23 2013\*\*\***

Introduction .....	Page 3
Character profiles .....	Page 4
Rupert Evans plays Harold Waring .....	Page 6
Director's notes by Andy Wilson .....	Page 8
Production design by Jeff Tessler .....	Page 10
Synopsis .....	Page 13
Cast list.....	Page 14
Production credits .....	Page 15

## ITV Press Office

### Press contacts:

Natasha Bayford - 0161 952 6209 / [natasha.bayford@itv.com](mailto:natasha.bayford@itv.com)

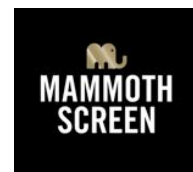
Sarah Banbury - 020 7157 3018 / [sarah.banbury@itv.com](mailto:sarah.banbury@itv.com)

### Picture contact:

Patrick Smith - 0207 157 3044 / [patrick.smith@itv.com](mailto:patrick.smith@itv.com)

*Agatha Christie*®

In association with



# INTRODUCTION

The penultimate Agatha Christie adaptation, *The Labours of Hercules*, will see the return of David Suchet as the world famous Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, alongside an exciting cast which includes Simon Callow (*Four Weddings and a Funeral, Shakespeare in Love*), Patrick Ryecart (*The Kings Speech, The High Life*), Rupert Evans (*The Village, Fleming, World without End*), Orla Brady (*Sinbad, Mistresses*), Morven Christie (*Hunted, Twenty Twelve*), Fiona O'Shaughnessy (*Utopia, Outcast*), Tom Austen (*Beaver Falls, The Borgias*), Eleanor Tomlinson (*The White Queen, Jack the Giant Slayer*) and Tom Wlaschiha (*Game of Thrones, Christopher and his Kind*).

Adapted by Guy Andrew (*Blandings, Bouquet of Barbed Wire, Lost in Austen*) and directed by Andy Wilson (*Ripper Street, Sinbad, Kidnap and Ransom*) the story begins when Poirot's egotism plays a part in the murder of society girl Lucinda (Lorna Nickson Brown) at the hands of the notorious Marrascaud.

Following Lucinda's murder, Poirot falls in to a deep depression and Doctor Burton (Tom Chadbon) does all he can to revive the detective's spirits. However, it's the desperate plea of lonely chauffeur (Tom Austen) to find his missing true love, which eventually makes Poirot feel as though he can return to work.

The quest to find Burton's soul mate takes the infamous detective to the Swiss Alps where fate, one again, plays its hand. Against all odds, Poirot stumbles on Hotel Olympos, thought to be Marrascaud's hideout and a game of cat and mouse ensues.

Poirot is determined to find the villain he most fears and despises before his nemesis kills again. But this could lead to a very personal showdown.

Produced by David Boulter (*Whitechapel, He Kills Coppers, The Forsyte Saga*) *The Labours of Hercules* forms part of the thirteenth and final series. *Curtain: Poirot's Last Case* is the conclusion to Agatha Christie's Poirot and will be screened on ITV during November 2013.

The Poirot stories are co-produced by ITV Studios and Agatha Christie Ltd, an RLJ Entertainment group company. Mammoth Screen's Michele Buck, Damien Timmer and Karen Thrusell (*Parade's End, Endeavour, Monroe*) executive produce Poirot on behalf of ITV Studios. Hilary Strong is executive producer for Agatha Christie Ltd. ITV Global holds international distribution rights.

**Notes to editors:** Guy Andrews previously adapted the Agatha Christie Poirot novels *Appointment with Death* (2008), *Taken at the Flood* (2006) and *The Mystery of the Blue Train* (2005) for ITV. Andy Wilson has also directed the Agatha Christie Poirot adaptations, *Taken at the Flood* (2006) and *Death on the Nile* (2004).

## CHARACTER PROFILES

### **MARRASCAUD**

A serial murderer and art thief who has recently become the bane of auction houses and museums across Europe. Marrascaud's latest heist was conducted beneath Hercule Poirot's very nose. Has the great detective met his match?

### **HAROLD WARING played by Rupert Evans**

A parliamentary under-secretary in the Foreign Office. His unswerving loyalty is abused by Sir Anthony Morgan, who sends him into exile in Switzerland rather than submit to the looming sex scandal.

### **COUNTESS VERA ROSSAKOFF played by Orla Brady**

Last seen in Poirot mystery *The Double Clue*, the kleptomaniac countess is the only woman to have stirred Poirot's aging heart. She claims her life of crime is over and is content to spend her days as a mother to Alice Cunningham. But she is a known liar, and Poirot is aware of this.

### **KATRINA SAMOUSHENKA played by Fiona O'Shaughnessy**

The famous Russian dancer has been confined to her bedroom in the Hotel Olympos by her personal physician Doctor Lutz. She certainly seems to be behaving erratically but is she prisoner or patient?

### **DR HEINRICH LUTZ played by Simon Callow**

The Austrian psychotherapist's sole purpose is the care and cure of the famous Russian dancer Katrina Samoushenka. He is also a keen pianist, a disciple of Liszt and has fiery intellectual clashes with Poirot.

### **ELSIE CLAYTON played by Morven Christie**

Travelling in Switzerland with her mother and husband, this charming young lady immediately strikes a rapport with Harold Waring, who strongly suspects she is suffering at the hands of her alcoholic partner and plans to ride to her rescue.

### **MRS ANNABEL RICE played by Sandy McDade**

Keen to protect her daughter Elsie from the advances of strangers, Mrs Rice, a regular at Hotel Olympos, is blunt and occasionally downright rude, particularly when she discovers that her favourite waiter Robert seems to have vanished without explanation.

### **TED WILLIAMS played by Tom Austen**

Poirot's chauffeur is reeling from a momentous love affair with Nita, the maid of a famous Russian dancer. Ted imagines he will never see his true love again, but Poirot thinks differently, and sets off for the Continent in pursuit.

**FRANCESCO played by Nigel Lindsay**

Owner of the Hotel Olympos, home of the 'internationally acclaimed Alpine spa therapy', Francesco gives his guests a five-star experience, but he is also one of the most corrupt men in Switzerland.

**GUSTAVE played by Richard Katz**

Hotel Olympos' newest recruit is the hapless waiter Gustave, who soon reveals himself to Poirot as terrified undercover policeman Drouet, but is he telling the complete truth?

**ALICE CUNNINGHAM played by Eleanor Tomlinson**

Educated in England, Rossakoff's sharp-witted daughter is an academic prodigy, a student of the burgeoning discipline of criminology. To this end, she and her faithful hound Binky see fit to 'shadow' Poirot when he resumes the pursuit of Marrascaud.

**SCHWARTZ played by Tom Wlaschiha**

The most enigmatic resident of Hotel Olympos. Schwartz claims to be an insurance investigator with an obsessive love of parlour games, but it's clear this isn't the whole truth. Will he turn out to be an invaluable ally, or Poirot's brutal nemesis?

**INSPECTOR LEMENTEUIL played by Nicholas McGaughey**

Swiss detective Lementeuil has come closer than anyone to tracing the villainous Marrascaud, and he is delighted when the illustrious Poirot joins the investigation at Hotel Olympos. His representative in the isolated mountain retreat is the undercover policeman Drouet.

**LUCINDA LE MESURIER played by Lorna Nickson Brown**

A beautiful debutante who, along with a famous painting, a diamond necklace and Poirot himself, is the bait used to lure Marrascaud into the arms of the law.

**SIR ANTHONY MORGAN played by Patrick Ryecart**

The British Foreign Secretary. His extra-marital entanglements have got him into hot water with the media, which forces his meek under-secretary, Harold Waring, to take responsibility.

**DOCTOR BURTON played by Tom Chadbon**

Poirot consults with Doctor Burton when he sinks into a depression after failing to catch Marrascaud. Burton's advice - to keep mind and body active, nothing good can come of an idle Poirot.



## **RUPERT EVANS PLAYS HAROLD WARING**

### **What attracted you to *The Labours of Hercules*?**

I've been a great fan of Poirot and particularly David Suchet for many years. To get the opportunity to be a part of this legacy was very exciting to me. Added to that was the role itself, Harold Waring is a lovely character to play.

### **Are you a fan of the Agatha Christie Poirot stories?**

The great thing about the Poirot films is that at their core are great stories. Every generation knows about Hercule Poirot, both the man and the world he lives in. I, for one, can watch them over and over again!

### **Tell us about your character Harold Waring?**

I love Harold Waring. He is a product of his upbringing and somewhat emotionally inexperienced. During the film we see him come to life. He falls madly in love and seems to break free from the shackles of institutionalisation. The question is how far would he go for his newfound passion?

### **What brings Harold to Hotel Olympos?**

You will see from the opening couple of scenes that Harold's boss finds himself in a spot of bother, due to an indiscretion. Poor Harold, being the gentleman he is, takes the blame and is sent off to lie low at the Hotel Olympos.

### **What are Harold's observations on the other guests staying at Hotel Olympos?**

In truth Harold's attention is solely focused on Mrs Clayton. It really is love at first sight. Her mother, Mrs Rice, keeps close watch over her daughter but Harold does everything he can to gain a precious few moments with the beguiling lady.

**The tone of this particular film is very different and a lot darker to the previous adaptations. What can viewers expect to see from this story?**

The Director, Andy Wilson, had a real vision for this particular film. At times the camera really conveys the feelings of Poirot and the hotel's guests. Because of the snowstorm, the characters find themselves trapped inside the hotel for an extended period. The sense of claustrophobia is palpable. The guests become, in a sense, trapped and both the characters and camera seem to react to this pressure in varying and unexpected ways.

**How was working with David Suchet on the Poirot production?**

Working with David was, for me, the highlight. He's a professional and a gentleman to the end, and a man of immense generosity and extraordinary ability. I learnt a huge amount from just watching him at work.

***The Labours of Hercules* will be the penultimate film to broadcast. Was it a privilege to be part of the thirteenth and final series?**

To be a part of the final dance, as it were, is a complete joy and certainly added to the film. I hope David and the viewers enjoy it as much as we did filming it. Getting to be in the biggest 'whodunit' and being a part of that history is a bonus and one of the great perks of the job!

## DIRECTOR'S TONE NOTES BY ANDY WILSON

There is a significant difference to the style and tone of ITV's latest Agatha Christie adaptation, *The Labours of Hercules*, which might surprise the viewing audience.

Remaining true to the Agatha Christie brand, Director Andy Wilson, whose television credits include, *Ripper Street*, *Sinbad* and *Cracker*, provides a personal insight into his approach with the following tone notes written ahead of filming in April 2013.

### **Tone notes:**

This is an unusual Poirot story in that there are no actual crimes committed which our hero has to solve. He knows the villain is Marrascaud from the outset. The mystery is thus of a different nature. Poirot is trapped in a hotel where one of his fellow guests could be his nemesis and he must decide who it is.

The story is essentially a journey of restoration and redemption for Poirot. In the opening scene his professional pride leads him to believe he will capture the villain in a sting he is reluctantly supervising which uses a young woman and a painting as bait to lure the jewel thief killer. He arrogantly presumes his presence will ensure a successful outcome. However, his nemesis outsmarts him and brutally kills the young woman and succeeds in stealing the painting whilst avoiding detection. With his pride bruised and suffering from the knowledge of his own hubris, Poirot plunges into a depression.

His doctor advises him to pick himself up and take another job quickly. He takes a negligible job on a whim, tracing a lost lover for a humble driver "pro bono" without fee. This propels him on a journey to a remote Alpine Spa, where by chance he falls into an on-going operation by the international police to capture his very nemesis. Also by chance several figures from his past are present. Poirot is forced to engage with a more significant job than the one he was expecting. He is forced to regain his confidence and review his abilities, which have been dulled by fear of failure. Indeed he is forced to review his own mythology and psychology, which for him the observer of the human natures of others par excellence, is an extremely uncomfortable duty.

I believe this will give the audience a different perspective to the previous Poirot stories. It will have the effect of promoting Poirot to the position of central character in the actual film's narrative. The film will seem to be about him, rather than about the other characters involved in the crime he is investigating.

It should also allow me to describe and dramatise Poirot's journey through the piece, which I believe is a rather brilliant classic hero's tale. Poirot is at a low ebb, is given a mission, takes up the call to action, receives help and hindrance from various shades of his life and past and arriving at a psychically cleansed and renewed position where he no longer has to "hide" from himself and his self-doubt.

Poirot himself may initially be struggling to make sense of the topsy turvy reality of his coincidental incarceration in the hotel with so many reminders of past triumphs and failures. It will allow us to create moments of drama where we see a side to Poirot that we may not yet have witnessed, his real humanity plagued by the same regrets and doubts as we mere mortals.



The world's greatest detective questioning his decision to sacrifice love, family and comfort in pursuit of career. Poirot's journey to recovery of his faculties will be acutely dramatic.

After a bright and garishly coloured opening sequence, when Poirot visits his doctor and in the journey through the hotel, colours will be drained and subdued, at the hotel almost monochrome. The snow and landscape and the pale interior of the hotel itself lending weight to the monochromatic state of Poirot's feelings; the world for him has become colourless as he cannot find the energy to engage his little grey cells in proper employment. The film should have a slightly psychotic tone.

We should feel a sense of laden portent in all the events. A sense that everyone is potentially evil or corrupt in this tiny hermetic world.

Sound will also play a huge role in the film. The hotel itself should be a character, replete with unusual and unnerving sounds, David Lynch style rumblings from the heating system and the surrounding snowscape adding to the general discomfort felt by Poirot.

It should feel as though Poirot and our gallery of characters are trapped in a slightly skewed world where their actions seem pre-ordained by fate, and from which there is no escape. It's a Freudian dreamscape with a deadly serious endgame. Either Poirot will die or he will restore himself.

The Hotel Olympos is indeed a gathering place of the gods of crime and detection engaged in a mythic struggle between good and evil.

Andy Wilson

## PRODUCTION DESIGN BY JEFF TESSLER

Production Designer Jeff Tessler began working across the Agatha Christie TV brand in 2004. Since then he has designed fifteen Marple and seventeen Poirot adaptations including the iconic and best known title *Murder on the Orient Express*, which screened on ITV during Christmas 2010.

Working with his team, alongside director Andy Wilson and writer Guy Andrews for the penultimate Poirot adaptation, *The Labours of Hercules*, Jeff's brief was to create a very distinctive environment for Hercule Poirot - a 1930s hotel situated in the Swiss Alps.

### **How did your preparation for *The Labours of Hercules* begin?**

The preparation work for *The Labours of Hercules* started after the producers and executives had an initial script meeting to decide how this story was going to be adapted for television.

I then received a phone call asking 'If we decide to create a Swiss hotel up the mountains can we achieve this?' My reply to this was 'Yes, I'm sure we can' and that was where my preparation and thought process for the design started.

I then needed to look at the logistics and planning as to how the team could create a hotel environment, situated in the Swiss Alps, and more importantly where we would design and film it.

### **The central on-screen setting for *The Labours of Hercules* is Hotel Olympos in Switzerland. How many sets and locations were used to create this environment?**

Locations included the RAF Halton House based in Aylesbury, Pinewood Studios and the HDS Studios situated in Hayes.

It seemed Halton House was the only place in which we could possibly set this story. The first thing we did was to check availability during the dates we were planning to film. Following this I then showed photographs of the buildings to the producer and executives to see if this would work for them from a visual perspective.

At Halton House we used the exterior, terrace, the main hall, living room and the dining room to film in. We also built the outside of the funicular station at the front of this location.

The only set we built at HDS Studios was the interior of the hotel bedrooms, which was one set reconfigured to look like several different guest bedrooms.

### **What style was required to create Hotel Olympos?**

From the outset we were looking to create a very grand and exclusive hotel and there were only two styles during this period of time in Switzerland which could have been replicated. Either a very modern glass 30s sanatorium, and there wasn't anywhere like this in the UK, or something similar to the big Edwardian hotels that were built around the lakes in Switzerland.

Halton was built by the Rothschild family so had a very European style to it. The Rothschilds came to the UK and built houses in the style they knew. Halton is a smaller version of a grand European hotel so it was in keeping with our brief.

Literally, if we hadn't been able to film at Halton I'm not sure where we could have shot this. The story almost came out of the location.

### **How did you discover Halton House?**

We had previously used this location for a Marple adaptation and whilst it does get used for filming occasionally we had never used it for a Poirot, and we wanted to use a new location that hadn't been used on the series before.

### **What set dressings and props were brought in to Halton?**

As Halton is an empty house we brought everything in. It's now used as an RAF Officers' Mess so it doesn't have any of the original furniture.

Visually for the interior there are lots of reference books for grand old European hotels. I also came across some original Edwardian photographs of how Halton was dressed shortly after it was built so we knew very quickly the style we could achieve.

### **What were the biggest challenges when designing and planning the sets?**

The hardest and biggest challenge was probably the funicular journey taken by Poirot and some of the hotel's guests. Because they become stranded at the hotel you have to show them travelling from the station at the bottom of the mountain up to the top where they then arrive and leave the funicular.

The scene itself was made up of a lot of different components. The outside of the base station was a shot taken in the French Alps. The inside was a set-built at Pinewood Studios and we also built the carriage, which was intercut with footage filmed on location and had to match an original Edwardian funicular of which there is only really one that is still working.

We also built the inside of the top station as a set at Pinewood and separate to this we then had to build the exterior of this set at Halton and cover it all with snow. It was a particularly complicated combination of things to make that one journey believable, but incredible fun to do.

### **The Director, Andy Wilson, had a clear vision about the tone and direction this film would take. How did you collaborate?**

When Andy came on board we talked extensively about the tone of this film. Together we looked at lots of pictures and photography to find ways in which we could capture Poirot's state of mind as shortly after the film begins, Poirot is in a very depressed state and Andy wanted the rooms to reflect this mood.

We also looked at the work by the Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershoi who is known for his portraits and interiors, which are stark and simple. His work is muted in tone and he used a lot of pale greys and other dark hues so that was our starting point for the overall look.

**What is the most satisfying part of your job?**

The most satisfying part of my job is when the cast walk on to the sets and feel at home.

All we are trying to do is create an environment for the scenes and dialogue. If the actors don't feel comfortable or they don't believe in their surroundings then their performances aren't going to be real.

**Since you began working on the Poirot adaptations what has been your career highlight?**

Let's hope it will be *Curtain: Poirot's Last Case*. It's a great film, very different and again the design team were very influential in its direction. Having worked on the series for a number of years we all want Poirot to go out on a high.

## SYNOPSIS

**The following synopsis is published in the production notes for forward planning purposes only. Please do not reproduce entirely and do not reveal the ending.**

**Many thanks.**

Desperate to catch infamous art thief Marrascaud, the Metropolitan Police build what they imagine is a perfect trap. The Le Mesurier family is to announce the society debut of their beautiful daughter Lucinda (Lorna Nickson Brown), who will be wearing an exceptionally expensive diamond necklace. On display will be 'Hercules Vanquishing the Hydra', a priceless work by Marrascaud's favourite artist Van Druys. Last but not least, the great Hercule Poirot (David Suchet) will be in attendance. How can Marrascaud resist?

The results are catastrophic. Marrascaud steals the painting and the jewels from beneath Poirot's nose, leaving behind the butchered body of Lucinda. Devastated by the events Poirot falls into a heavy depression.

Doctor Burton (Tom Chadbon) does all he can to revive the detective's spirits, but it's not until a lonely chauffeur Ted Williams (Tom Austen) begs the detective to find his missing true love Nita, the maid of famous Russian dancer Katrina Samoushenka (Fiona O'Shaughnessy), that Poirot feels he can return to his work.

The quest for Nita takes Poirot to the Swiss Alps, where fate plays a hand: against all odds, Poirot has stumbled upon Hotel Olympos, now thought to be Marrascaud's hideout.

When an avalanche cuts off access to the hotel, Poirot finds himself in a game of cat-and-mouse with a villain he fears and despises.

What is the secret of bedridden dancer Katrina Samoushenka and her missing maid Nita? What are the true intentions of her Freudian therapist Doctor Lutz (Simon Callow)? Why is Member of Parliament Harold Waring (Rupert Evans), dogged by salacious Fleet Street rumors, hiding in Switzerland? Will Mrs. Annabel Rice (Sandy McDade) and her daughter Elsie Clayton (Morven Christie) escape the wrath of Elsie's abusive husband Philip? Is effusive Italian hotel owner Francesco (Nigel Lindsay) to be trusted? Who is the enigmatic parlor-game enthusiast Schwartz (Tom Wlaschiha)?

Just when it seems like the situation couldn't be more baffling or more dangerous there is another arrival at the hotel, none other than the jewel thief Countess Vera Rossakoff (Orla Brady), whom Poirot has not encountered for over twenty years. This vivacious Russian émigré is the only woman to have stirred his heart, could she really be a killer? And what of her prodigious daughter, criminologist Alice Cunningham (Eleanor Tomlinson), and her ghastly bulldog Binky?

Any one of these people could be Marrascaud but is the disoriented Poirot in a fit state to tell psychology from stagecraft, passions from posture, fact from fiction before his nemesis kills again?

## CAST LIST

Hercule Poirot.....	David Suchet
Sir Anthony Morgan .....	Patrick Ryecart
Harold Waring .....	Rupert Evans
Lucinda .....	Lorna Nickson Brown
Doctor Lutz .....	Simon Callow
Elsie Clayton .....	Morven Christie
Countess Vera Rossakoff .....	Orla Brady
Katrina Samoushenka .....	Fiona O'Shaughnessy
Schwartz .....	Tom Wlaschiha
Inspector Lementeuil.....	Nicholas McGaughey
Alice Cunningham.....	Eleanor Tomlinson
Ted Williams .....	Tom Austen
Miss Annabel Rice.....	Sandy McDade
Chief Inspector .....	Stephen Frost
Francesco.....	Nigel Lindsay
Gustave.....	Richard Katz
Doctor Burton.....	Tom Chadbon
Policewoman .....	Isobel Middleton

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

Executive Producers ..... Michele Buck  
..... Damien Timmer  
..... Karen Thrussell  
Managing Director Agatha Christie Ltd and Acorn Productions Ltd ..... Hilary Strong  
Chairman Agatha Christie Ltd ..... Mathew Prichard  
Writer ..... Guy Andrews  
Producer ..... David Boulter  
Director ..... Andy Wilson  
Associate Producer ..... David Suchet  
Line Producer ..... Matthew Hamilton  
Director of Photography ..... Ian Moss  
Casting Director ..... Susie Parriss  
Editor ..... Adam Bosman  
First AD ..... Marcus Catlin  
Script Editor ..... Thom Hutchinson  
Production Designer ..... Jeff Tessler  
Art Director ..... Pilar Foy  
Costume Designer ..... Sheena Napier  
Dresser to David Suchet ..... Anne Marie Bigby  
Make Up Designer ..... Bee Archer  
Make Up Artist to David Suchet ..... Sian Turner Miller  
Composer ..... Christian Henson  
Location Manager ..... Robin Pim  
Production Co-ordinator ..... Pat Bryan